

COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM

English Literature

Description of the Examination

The Subject Examination in English Literature covers the material that is usually taught in a two-semester course (or the equivalent) at the college level. The test is primarily concerned with major authors and literary works, but it also includes questions on some minor writers. Candidates are expected to be acquainted with common literary themes, common literary terms such as metaphor and personification, and basic literary forms such as the sonnet and ballad.

In both coverage and approach, the exam resembles the historically organized survey of English literature offered by many colleges that deals with literature from Beowulf to the present. It assumes that the candidate has read widely and developed an appreciation of English literature, knows the basic literary periods, has a sense of the historical development of English literature, and is able to identify the author of a representative quotation or to recognize the period in which an excerpt was written.

The exam consists of approximately 105 multiple-choice questions to be answered in two separately timed 45-minute sections.

There is also an optional essay section that can be taken in addition to the multiple-choice test. The essay section is graded by the institution that requests it. Contact the school where you would like to receive credit for your CLEP exam to see if they require the optional essay section for this exam.

Knowledge and Skills Required

The English Literature exam requires the following knowledge and abilities. The percentages at the left show the relative emphasis given to knowledge and ability, but most questions draw on both.

➡ *Approximate Percent of Examination*

- 45% Knowledge of information related to:
- Literary background
 - Identification of authors
 - Metrical patterns
 - Literary references
- 55% Ability to:
- Analyze the elements of form in a literary passage
 - Perceive meanings
 - Identify tone and mood
 - Follow patterns of imagery
 - Identify characteristics of style

Sample Questions

The 45 sample questions that follow are similar to questions on the English Literature exam, but they do not actually appear on it.

Before attempting to answer the sample questions, read all the information about the English Literature exam on the preceding page and above. Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP exams are provided in Chapter 1.

Try to answer correctly as many questions as possible. Then compare your answers with the correct answers, given at the end of this examination guide.

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements on the following pages is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

In a pungent critique of humanity addressed to the mature imagination, the author comments on human nature by examining the life of the Lilliputians, Yahoos, and Houyhnhnms.

1. The book described above is

- (A) *The Way of All Flesh*
- (B) *Through the Looking Glass*
- (C) *Gulliver's Travels*
- (D) *The Pilgrim's Progress*
- (E) *Robinson Crusoe*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

One of the great triumphs of the play is Shakespeare's addition of the character of the Fool, who attempts to comfort his old master and is distressed and puzzled by his madness, but who also ironically emphasizes the folly and the tragedy of the old man.

2. The play referred to above is

- (A) *Macbeth* (B) *Julius Caesar* (C) *King Lear*
- (D) *Othello* (E) *Hamlet*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 3-4

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

3. The lines above are written in

- (A) heroic couplets (B) terza rima (C) ballad meter
- (D) blank verse (E) iambic tetrameter

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

4. The language and ideas in these lines are most characteristic of which of the following literary periods?

(A) Medieval (B) Restoration (C) Augustan
(D) Romantic (E) Early twentieth century

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

5. Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Tobias Smollett are best known as eighteenth-century

(A) novelists (B) dramatists (C) essayists
(D) poets (E) critics

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

The business of a poet is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances. He does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations.

6. Which of the following statements most agrees with the paragraph above?

(A) Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.
(B) Poetry is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit.
(C) Poetry is the just representation of general nature.
(D) Poetry should not mean but be.
(E) Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

7. An anonymous narrative poem focusing on the climax of a particularly dramatic event and employing frequent repetition, conventional figures of speech, and sometimes a refrain — altered and transmitted orally in a musical setting — is called a

(A) popular ballad (B) pastoral elegy
(C) courtly lyric (D) villanelle
(E) chivalric romance

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 8-10

- They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.
- (5) Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitary way.
8. These lines were written by
(A) John Donne (B) Edmund Spenser (C) Christopher Marlowe
(D) William Shakespeare (E) John Milton
9. In line 2, “late” is best interpreted to mean
(A) recently (B) tardily (C) unfortunately
(D) long (E) soon
10. The people referred to as “they” in the passage were probably experiencing all the following emotions EXCEPT
(A) awe (B) doubt (C) suspicion
(D) regret (E) sorrow

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- Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
11. The lines above were written by
(A) Geoffrey Chaucer (B) William Shakespeare
(C) Alexander Pope (D) William Wordsworth
(E) Ben Johnson

12. Alfred Tennyson's "Ulysses" and T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" are both

- (A) pastoral elegies
- (B) literary ballads
- (C) mock epics
- (D) dramatic monologues
- (E) irregular odes

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 13-14

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
 Though I must go, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to airy thinness beat.

13. The passage contains an example of

- (A) an epic simile
- (B) a metaphysical conceit
- (C) an epic catalog
- (D) an alexandrine
- (E) sprung rhythm

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

14. The passage is from a poem by

- (A) Alexander Pope
- (B) Robert Herrick
- (C) Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- (D) Samuel Johnson
- (E) John Donne

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 15-17

... He's here in double trust:

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,

- (5) Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
(10) And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye.
That tears shall drown the wind.

15. The speaker of these lines might best be described as a

- (A) coward
(B) man badly treated by Duncan
(C) man seeking revenge
(D) man concerned only with his own safety
(E) man troubled by moral law

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

16. The "horrid deed" (line 13) is compared metaphorically to

- (A) a cinder or speck irritating the eye
(B) a naked newborn babe
(C) an assassination
(D) the wind
(E) the consequences of the murder of Duncan

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

17. These lines are spoken by

- (A) Hamlet (B) Cassius (C) Macbeth
(D) Iago (E) Richard III

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

18. Which of the following is the first line of a poem by John Keats?

- (A) "What dire offence from amorous causes springs"
- (B) "They flee from me that sometime did me seek"
- (C) "Thou still unravished bride of quietness"
- (D) "I weep for Adonais — he is dead"
- (E) "Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee"

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 19-20

O threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
 One thing at least is certain — *This* life flies;
 One thing is certain and the rest is Lies:
 The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

19. In the fourth line, "blown" means

- (A) blown up (B) blown away (C) bloomed
- (D) died (E) been planted

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

20. Which of the following is the best summary of the four lines?

- (A) Do not ignore the serious aspects of life; earnest dedication is necessary for success.
- (B) Do not rely on a theoretical afterlife; you can be sure only that the present moment will pass.
- (C) Life is like a flower with roots in both good and evil.
- (D) Religious belief is essential to a happy life.
- (E) The only safe course in life is to ignore outside events and cultivate one's own garden.

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

21. Which of the following was written earliest?

- (A) *The Waste Land*
- (B) *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
- (C) *Songs of Innocence*
- (D) *The Faerie Queene*
- (E) *The Rape of the Lock*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 22-23

She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes turned to him in quiet suffrance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither: and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.

—Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy.

22. The passage above appears in which of the following novels?

- (A) *Victory*
- (B) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- (C) *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*
- (D) *The Egoist*
- (E) *Sons and Lovers*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

23. The passage presents an example of what its author would have termed

- (A) synecdoche
- (B) pathetic fallacy
- (C) stream of consciousness
- (D) an eclogue
- (E) an epiphany

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 24-25 are based on an excerpt from Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*.

Now, the rake Hesperus has called for his breeches, and having well rubbed his drowsy eyes, prepared to dress himself for all night; by whose example his brother rakes on earth likewise leave those beds in which they slept away the day. Now Thetis, the good housewife, began
(5) to put on the pot, in order to regale the good man Phoebus after his daily labours were over. In vulgar language, it was the evening when Joseph attended his lady's orders.

24. Which of the following describes Hesperus (line 1), Thetis (line 4), and Phoebus (line 5) in the passage above?
- (A) They are references to Greek mythology.
 - (B) They are references to fellow authors.
 - (C) They are references to Biblical heroes.
 - (D) They refer to figures from English folklore.
 - (E) They are characters in the novel.
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
25. In line 6, "vulgar language" means
- (A) commonly spoken language
 - (B) elevated and archaic language
 - (C) ungrammatical language
 - (D) language laden with sexual puns
 - (E) language characterized by obsolete and dialectal terms
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
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26. The "Age of Johnson" in English literature was dominated by which of the following styles?
- (A) Romanticism
 - (B) Neoclassicism
 - (C) Expressionism
 - (D) Naturalism
 - (E) Abstractionism
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 27-29 are based on the following excerpt from Wolfgang Iser's *The Implied Reader*.

- When the narrator introduces his characters at the beginning of the novel, he says of Becky: "The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints, and lively on the wire." As the characters cannot free themselves from their [foolish
- (5) daydreams and] illusions, it is only to be expected that they should take them for unquestionable reality. The reader is made aware of this fact by the attitude of the narrator, who has not only seen through his "puppets," but also lets them act on a level of consciousness far below his own. This overwhelming superiority of the narrator over his
- (10) characters also puts the reader in a privileged position, though with the unspoken but ever-present condition that one should draw one's own conclusions from the extra knowledge imparted by the narrator.

27. The reference to "Becky Puppet" (line 2) emphasizes the

- (A) narrator's manner of presenting the characters to the reader
- (B) characters as voices that criticize the flaws of society
- (C) reader's difficulty in separating illusion from reality
- (D) unfathomable motives of the characters
- (E) unreliable information imparted by the narrator

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

28. The phrase "seen through" (line 7) refers to the

- (A) reader's realization that the narrator is a poor judge of character
- (B) narrator's claim that his characters are based on historical figures
- (C) inability of both the narrator and the reader to find fault in the characters
- (D) superiority of the reader's perspective over the narrator's
- (E) narrator's recognition of the limitation of the characters

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

29. The reference to a "privileged position" (line 10) points out that the

- (A) narrator mocks the reader
- (B) narrator is himself a conceited character
- (C) reader sympathizes with the narrator
- (D) reader distrusts the narrator because of his bias
- (E) reader actively evaluates the characters

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 30-32 are based on the following excerpt from Virginia Woolf's *Professions for Women*.

- I discovered that if I were going to review books I should need to do battle with a certain phantom. And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem, *The Angel in the House*. . . . She was intensely
- (5) sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draft she sat in it — in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds
- (10) and wishes of others. Above all — I need not say it — she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty — her blushes, her great grace. In those days — the last of Queen Victoria — every house had its Angel. And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words.

30. This passage's primary purpose is to

- (A) describe a person with a dual personality
- (B) praise the traditional role of women
- (C) describe a famous historical figure
- (D) encourage readers to take seriously the importance of literary ghosts
- (E) describe one impediment a woman writer faces in making a literary career

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

31. Which of the following effects does the battle metaphor have?

- I. It suggests how difficult the phantom will be to overcome.
- II. It enhances the emotional impact of the conflict described.
- III. It contributes to the mock-heroic tone of the entire passage.

- (A) I only
- (B) III only
- (C) I and II only
- (D) II and III only
- (E) I, II, and III

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

32. The tone of the discussion of “The Angel in the House” conveys the author’s
- (A) pleasure in remembering her literary precursors
 - (B) anger at people who write book reviews
 - (C) remorse for the slaying of an innocent person
 - (D) sense of the power of commonly held ideas
 - (E) enthusiasm about writing what she feels
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 33-34 are based on the following passage from Anita Desai’s novel *In Custody*.

- The time and the place: these elementary matters were left to Deven to arrange as being within his capabilities. Time and place, these two concerns of all who are born and all who die: these were considered the two fit subjects for the weak and the incompetent. Deven was to
- (5) restrict himself to these two matters, time and place. No one appeared to realize that to him these subjects belonged to infinity and were far more awesome than the minutiae of technical arrangements.

33. According to the passage, Deven is perceived by others to be
- (A) capable of arranging important details
 - (B) suited to performing only simple tasks
 - (C) unable to see the ultimate meaning of infinity
 - (D) obsessed with his own mortality
 - (E) happy in his role of organizing minor matters
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
34. The passage implies that Deven’s perspective differs from that of the people who have given him his assignment in that he is
- (A) innovative instead of fastidious
 - (B) intellectual instead of social
 - (C) philosophical instead of pragmatic
 - (D) cosmopolitan instead of bigoted
 - (E) judgmental instead of apathetic
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

35. What is the correct chronological order, from earliest to latest, of the following?

- I. *Hamlet*
- II. *Beowulf*
- III. *Paradise Lost*

- (A) I, II, III
- (B) I, III, II
- (C) II, I, III
- (D) II, III, I
- (E) III, II, I

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 36-37 are based on the following poem.

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;
 My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy;
 Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
 Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.

- (5) O could I lose all father now! for why
 Will man lament the state he should envy,
 To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,
 And, if no other misery, yet age?
 Rest in soft peace, and asked, say, "Here doth lie
 (10) Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry."
 For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such
 As what he may never like too much.

36. The speaker expresses all of the following thoughts EXCEPT:

- (A) Life has so many trials that perhaps death should be viewed as a welcome release.
- (B) Poetry can keep alive those whom fate tries to take away.
- (C) Bearing the death of his son is difficult because he had high expectations for him.
- (D) His son was the greatest achievement in his life.
- (E) He never again wants to become as attached to anybody or anything as he was to his son.

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

37. The tone of the poem is best described as

- (A) deferential (B) malicious (C) playful
(D) elegiac (E) melodramatic

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

38. *Lycidas* is a poem that

- (A) adapts a heroic legend from classical mythology to the society that the writer knew best
(B) manages in a short space to record much of English history
(C) mourns the death of the writer's friend but also reveals personal concerns of the writer
(D) uses an important historical event of its day to air the political views of the writer
(E) captures the magic of the Italian Renaissance and puts it into a realistic London setting

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

39. In the poem "The Canonization," the intense relationship between the speaker and the lover leads the speaker to argue that they should be considered candidates for sainthood.

The author of the poem described above is

- (A) W. B. Yeats
(B) Elizabeth Barrett Browning
(C) John Donne
(D) John Milton
(E) Gerard Manley Hopkins

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

40. All of the following were written in the eighteenth century EXCEPT

- (A) *Pamela*
(B) *Jane Eyre*
(C) *Tom Jones*
(D) *Tristram Shandy*
(E) *Moll Flanders*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

41. Observe me, Sir Anthony, I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning. . . . But, Sir Anthony, I would send her at nine years old to a boarding school, in order to let her earn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts; — and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries; — but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress to orthodoxy, that she might not misspell and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying.

The speaker of the lines above, as evidenced by her characteristic language, is

- (A) Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*
 - (B) Hellena in *The Rover*
 - (C) Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals*
 - (D) Miss Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*
 - (E) Rosalind in *As You Like It* (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
42. A novel that uses extensive parallels from classical Greek epic and adopts an antiheroic modernity is
- (A) *Lord Jim*
 - (B) *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*
 - (C) *A Tale of Two Cities*
 - (D) *A Passage to India*
 - (E) *Ulysses* (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
43. A twentieth-century absurdist play in which the characters largely talk in circles, the actions are nonconclusive, and the lines “Nothing to be done” and “It’d pass the time” are repeated is
- (A) *Riders to the Sea*
 - (B) *Equus*
 - (C) *Waiting for Godot*
 - (D) *Look Back in Anger*
 - (E) *Murder in the Cathedral* (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

44. Mill, Carlyle, and Tennyson all experienced and wrote about
- (A) an upbringing in an agrarian environment
 - (B) a personal crisis of faith
 - (C) the conservatism of Victorian courtship
 - (D) the benefits of modern science
 - (E) the triumph of democracy
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
45. Which of the following twentieth-century novelists was raised in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and is known for stories about Africa and for the innovative novel *The Golden Notebook*?
- (A) Virginia Woolf
 - (B) Doris Lessing
 - (C) George Orwell
 - (D) Margaret Atwood
 - (E) E. M. Forster
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Optional Essay Section

If your college requires that the optional essay section be taken in addition to the multiple-choice exam, you may wish to review the following information.

The optional essay section of the English Literature exam requires the candidate to write two essays. The first essay should be a well-organized critical essay on an excerpt from a literary work provided in the test book. For the second essay, candidates must discuss one of two given general statements, drawing from their reading for pertinent examples and supportive evidence.

For additional information, read the sections on “Taking Essay Exams,” in Chapter 2, and “How Essays Are Graded,” in Chapter 3.

Study Resources

To prepare for the English Literature exam, you should read critically the contents of at least one anthology, many of which are used as textbooks in English literature courses at the college level. Visit your local college bookstore to determine which anthologies and textbooks are used by the college for English Literature courses.

Most textbook anthologies contain a representative sample of readings as well as discussions of historical background, literary styles and devices characteristic of various authors and periods, and other material relevant to the test. The anthologies do vary somewhat in content, approach, and emphasis, and you are therefore advised to consult more than one anthology or some specialized books on major authors, periods, and literary forms and terminology. When selecting a more specialized book, check the table of contents against the “Knowledge and Skills Required” section on pages 1-2. You should also read some of the major novels that are mentioned or excerpted in the anthologies. You can probably obtain an extensive reading list of English literature from a college English department, library, or bookstore. The Internet is another resource you could explore.

Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP examinations are provided in Chapter 1.

Answers to Sample Questions

English Literature

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|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 26. B |
| 2. C | 27. A |
| 3. D | 28. E |
| 4. D | 29. E |
| 5. A | 30. E |
| 6. C | 31. C |
| 7. A | 32. D |
| 8. E | 33. B |
| 9. A | 34. C |
| 10. C | 35. C |
| 11. A | 36. B |
| 12. D | 37. D |
| 13. B | 38. C |
| 14. E | 39. C |
| 15. E | 40. B |
| 16. A | 41. C |
| 17. C | 42. E |
| 18. C | 43. C |
| 19. C | 44. B |
| 20. B | 45. B |
| 21. D | |
| 22. B | |
| 23. E | |
| 24. A | |
| 25. A | |
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